



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

IMITATION OF SPENSER AND MILTON IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: A NEW DOCUMENT

BY RONALD S. CRANE

In the history of eighteenth-century poetry a conspicuous place has long been given to the so-called Spenser and Milton revivals. Until recently, it has been very generally held that these movements represented a distinct break with the dominant taste of the first quarter of the century and, consequently, a significant step in the transition to Romanticism.¹ Within the last few years, however, a disposition has grown up to question this view, and to argue, with Professor Irving Babbitt, that

Certain tendencies in eighteenth-century England, that bulk so largely in the eyes of some critics among the causes of the English romantic movement, still have about them something that is conventional and, in the neo-classical sense, imitative. The Spenserian and Miltonian revivals, for example, led simply to new forms of poetical diction. In laying in their assortment of poetical pigments people went to Spenser and Milton instead of to Pope.²

Of these two interpretations, which is nearer the truth—that which assumes an essential kinship between poems inspired by the *Fairy Queen* or *Paradise Lost* and those imitative of Pope or the classics, or that which sees in such poems the beginnings of something revolutionary and new? To answer the question in a properly historical way would necessitate a careful study of what orthodox critics at the beginning of the century really thought of the matter. As a slight contribution to such a study, I wish to call attention to a work which, as early as 1709, brought the whole attitude underlying the Spenser and Milton revivals into close and explicit harmony with a thoroughly traditional conception of poetical imitation.

¹ Phelps, *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, Boston, 1893, pp. 15, 37, 47 ff., 87 ff., 171; Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1899, pp. 77 ff., 146 ff.

² *The New Laokoon. An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*, Boston, 1910, p. 27. Cf. also Cestre, *La Révolution française et les poètes anglais*, Paris, 1906, pp. 265, 302-303; H. E. Cory, "Spenser, Thomson, and Romanticism," in *P. M. L. A.*, xxvi, 1911, pp. 51-91; Odell Shepard, in *Jour. of Eng. and Ger. Phil.*, xvi, 1917, p. 162.

There was published in London in 1713 a small volume bearing the title, *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics and Forming a Just Style*.³ The author was Henry Felton, then rector of Whitwell in Derbyshire, later Principal of Edmund Hall, Oxford.⁴ On the titlepage the work was described as "Written in the Year 1709" (when Felton held the post of chaplain and tutor in the family of the Duke of Rutland); the preface repeated this statement and added that the manuscript was not "transcribed till the latter End of the next Summer"; at the close of the text appeared the date, "Dec. 29, 1710."⁵ Hearne, the antiquary, saw the book in May, 1713, and recorded in his diary the following comment: "'Tis a very light, foolish Performance, and shews the Author to be very vain & void of Judgment as well as Learning."⁶ Hearne, however, was scarcely fitted to appreciate such qualities as Felton possessed; between the two men there existed the same sort of temperamental antithesis as underlay the quarrel between Bentley and Temple a little over a decade before.⁷ The public at large, if we may trust the testimony of editions, took Felton somewhat more seriously than did Hearne. The *Dissertation* was reprinted five times between 1713 and 1753⁸—a fairly extensive vogue for a work of its kind.

³ According to the *D. N. B.* the date of the first edition was 1711. This date, however, is out of harmony with the testimony of Thomas Hearne, the Oxford antiquary, who had excellent means of knowing the facts of Felton's life and a certain malicious interest in recording them. In his diary for May 21, 1713 he alluded to the *Dissertation* as "Just published," and in a note added on January 8, 1715/16, he remarked that "there is just now come out a 2d Edition of this light Book." See *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, Oxford, Printed for the Oxford Historical Society, 1885-1914, iv, p. 180.

⁴ Felton was born in 1679 and died in 1740. The chief sources for his life and character are a memoir by his son prefixed to a collection of his sermons published in 1748 (the article on Felton in the *D. N. B.* is based in the main on this work), and numerous entries in the diary of Thomas Hearne (see indexes).

⁵ *Dissertation* . . . , The Third Edition, corrected, London, Printed for Jonah Bowyer, 1723, 12mo, pp. i, 274. My references throughout are to this edition. The principal changes from the edition of 1713 are indicated by Felton: see pp. i-ii, xvii, 155-156.

⁶ *Remarks and Collections*, iv, 180. Cf. *Ibid.*, ix, 63.

⁷ For Felton's opinion of Bentley and Temple see *Dissertation*, xiv-xv, 67-68, 270.

⁸ The second edition appeared late in 1715 or early in 1716 (*Remarks and*

In view of the ideas expressed in the volume, this diffusion, betokening a certain representative quality, is not without significance.

Written originally for the benefit of Felton's pupil, John Roos, afterward third Duke of Rutland, the *Dissertation* took the form of an extended but informal epistle. "I have ventured," the author remarked, "to write without any declared Order."⁹ Nevertheless, he seldom neglected to mark the transitions between his points or to label his not very frequent digressions. His plan involved five principal topics: a comparison between the Greek and Latin classics, both in their general qualities and in their particular authors and genres;¹⁰ a pronouncement as to the best methods of reading the classics;¹¹ a definition of the qualities of a "just style";¹² an analysis of the principles of imitation;¹³ and a survey of the more notable English writers, past and present.¹⁴ The whole constituted a readable if not a very profound treatise on the formation of taste and style.

At the center of the book, dominating its thinking throughout, was the idea of imitation of models. The importance which Felton attached to this doctrine is evident not only from the considerable amount of space which he devoted to it but also from various explicit statements scattered through the volume. One of the most revealing of these was his justification of his preference for Latin literature over Greek. The lack of originality in Latin writing, its prevailing imitativeness, so far from constituting a weakness, seemed to him one of the conditions of its superiority. The Romans, he wrote, "have been such happy Imitators, that the Copies have proved more exact than the Originals; and *Rome* hath triumphed over *Athens*, as well in Wit, as Arms; for tho' *Greece* may have the Honour of Invention, yet 'tis easier to strike out a new Course of Thought, than to equal old Originals, and therefore it is more Honour to surpass, than to invent anew. *Verrio* is a great Man from his own Designs, but if he had attempted upon the *Cartons*, and outdone *Raphael Urbin* in Life and Colours, he had

Collections, iv, 180); the third, "corrected," in 1718 (*British Museum Catalogue*); a reprint of this, in 1723 (see note 5, above); the fourth, "with additions," in 1730 (*British Museum Catalogue*); and the fifth, in 1753 (*ibid.*).

⁹ *Dissertation*, 116.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58-131.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17-35.

¹² *Ibid.*, 132-207.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35-58.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 208-274.

been acknowledged greater than that celebrated Master, but now we must think him less.”¹⁵ In a later passage, no less explicit, after defining imitation as “no more than proposing some excellent Writer for a Pattern, and endeavouring to copy his Perfections in the most distinguishing Parts of his Character,” Felton proceeded to point out that “among the *Romans*, *Horace* is the Standard of *Lyric*, and *Virgil* of *Epic* Poetry; and those Moderns who could ever flatter themselves to succeed in either, have proposed these great Masters with old *Homer* and the *Grecian* *Lyrics* for their Pattern. If they wrote after *Horace* and *Virgil* in *Latin*, they studied their Expression as well as Thought; if in their Native Tongue, they have formed themselves as near as possible upon those great Models.”¹⁶ Surely, faith in the salutary effects of imitation could not well be more complete.

What Felton meant by imitation he explained at length in the long passage in the *Dissertation* devoted particularly to that subject. He began by clearing out of the way a number of processes often grouped under imitation, which were not, in his opinion, properly imitation at all. He dealt thus with translation, with paraphrase, with the device of “adapting *Ancient Authors* to *Modern* Times, and making *Horace*, *Juvenal*, *Persius*, &c. not only speak our Language, but know our Manners,”¹⁷ and with the kindred device of borrowing an ancient writer’s plan and thoughts for the treatment of a modern subject.¹⁸ Legitimate as most of these methods were, they were legitimate as “transcription,”¹⁹ not as imitation. The true way of imitation entailed no such “servile and mean”²⁰ copying of another. “If *Horace* himself had been called upon to add a *fifth* Book of *Odes* to the *fourth* . . . he would doubtless have *imitated* his former Pieces, and the youngest Child had carried the same Resemblance of the Father, which could be found in any of its elder Brethren: But he never would have copied from any of his old Pieces, nor fancied, that when the same Occasion offered, the same Verses, with some little Alteration, and the same Thoughts, with another Application, would have served: The Subject of the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18. The allusion is to Antonio Verrio (1639?-1707), an Italian designer employed at the English court.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 177-183.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.

Ode might be the same, but his Method of treating it would be different: He would write indeed like himself; you should know it to be *Horace's* Production; and so far he would *imitate* himself. . . . To *imitate Horace* then, is to write as himself would have done upon the same Occasions, on which we propose him to Imitation. We must have the same Turn of Thought, the same Faculty of Expression, and in a word, the same Genius with himself."²¹

For Felton the great masters of the true imitation were the ancients. He fortified his own counsels with their theories, quoting Cicero's warning against imitating the mannerisms of writers,²² and Quintilian's declaration that "*Imitation* is not so much copying after, or trying to resemble another Author in his Conceptions and Style, as an Emulation plainly to rival him in his own Way, and to excell him where he hath most excelled."²³ He likewise multiplied examples of their practice. "*Plato* in Prose," he reminded his reader, "is the *Imitator of Homer's* Diction in Verse; not of his Poetical Fancies, but of the Copiousness, the Majesty, and Loftiness of his Style. In *Latin*, *Terence* imitated *Menander*, yet not as a *Transcriber*, or *Translator*, but so as to raise a new Fabrick with the old Materials. *Horace* hath imitated the *Grecian Lyrics*, and mixed . . . the Soft, the Amorous, the Jovial, with the Grave and Sublime. *Virgil* too, he is an *Imitator* of the *Grecians*, of *Theocritus* in his *Pastorals* . . . ; but above all, he is the Professed *Imitator* of *Homer*, out of whose Poems he hath formed a *Third*, distinct from *either*, and more perfect than *Both*."²⁴ True imitation, in a word, consisted in doing with the Roman writers what they had done with the Greek: not translating, or paraphrasing, or transcribing them, but rivalling them in their own thoughts and expression, and telling the same story or writing upon the same theme better than they.²⁵

Flexible and even self-contradictory as this theory was in many ways, it must have seemed to those Englishmen who met with it in 1713 not only thoroughly orthodox but somewhat old-fashioned as well. There was certainly nothing new in the idea that only through the judicious imitation of ancient models could a writer attain real mastery of his art. "The third requisite in our *Poet*, or *Maker*,"

²¹ *Ibid.*, 183-185.

²² *Ibid.*, 187.

²³ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

Ben Jonson had written nearly a century before, "is *Imitation*, to bee able to convert the substance or Riches of another *Poet*, to his own use."²⁶ Sir William Davenant had been of opinion that we are inclined to imitation by Nature herself.²⁷ And Dryden, strengthening his argument with the same parallel from painting that Felton later employed, had declared that "to copy the best author, is a kind of praise, if I perform it as I ought; as a copy after Raffaele is more to be commended than an original of any indifferent painter."²⁸ Many of the earlier exponents of imitation, too, had warned quite as plainly as Felton against the servility of mere copying. Thus Ben Jonson, in the passage already quoted: "Not, to imitate servilely, as *Horace* saith, and catch at vices, for vertue, but to draw forth out of the best, and choicest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour: make our *Imitation* sweet: observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them. How *Vergil*, and *Statius* have imitated *Homer*: how *Horace*, *Archilochus*; how *Alcoeus*, and the other *Liricks*: and so of the rest."²⁹ At the time Felton wrote and published his *Dissertation*, and in the years immediately following, this traditional conception of imitation was receiving brilliant support from the example and precept of Alexander Pope.³⁰

²⁶ *Timber: or, Discoveries* (1641), ed. Maurice Castelain, Paris, 1907, p. 125.

²⁷ *Preface to Gondibert* (1650), in Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 1908, II, pp. 7, 8.

²⁸ *A Parallel of Poetry and Painting* (1695), in *Works*, ed. Scott-Saintsbury, XVII, 316. See also the preface to *Albion and Albanus* (1685), *ed. cit.*, VII, 229-230.

²⁹ *Timber*, *ed. cit.*, p. 125. Cf. also Dryden, *Dedication of the Aeneis* (1697): "And thus I might imitate Virgil, if I were capable of writing a heroic poem, and yet the invention be my own: but I should endeavour to avoid a servile copying" (*Works*, *ed. cit.*, XIV, 189).

³⁰ The principal texts showing what Pope thought of imitation are as follows: a letter to Walsh, July 2, 1706 (*Works*, ed. Elwin-Courthope, VI, 52); *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* (wr. c. 1706; pr. 1717); *Essay on Criticism* (1711); Preface to the 1717 edition of the *Works* (Elwin-Courthope, I, 9); *The Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1728), ch. ix. Pope's imitativeness was a favorite theme of his critics. See, for example, Dennis, *A True Character of Mr. Pope* (1716), pp. 6-7; *Daily Journal*, April 5, 1718, reprinted in *A Collection . . . occasioned by . . . the Miscellanies* (1728), pp. 24, 25; *The Ourliad* (1729), pp. 12-13; Gerard, *Epistle to the Egregious Mr. Pope* (1734), p. 8. I owe these and other references to my friend Dr. George

Already, however, a new view, destined in the course of the century to supplant the old Renaissance orthodoxy, had begun to find disciples. This is not the place to describe in detail the reaction against imitation which, beginning very early in the century, spread gradually during the next fifty years, and found powerful champions shortly after 1750 in Johnson and Young.³¹ None of these opponents of imitation had any desire to weaken the authority of classic taste. Young, indeed, proclaimed his reverence for ancient literature in the very act of deprecating imitation of it. "Let not Assertors of Classic Excellence," he wrote in his *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), "imagine, that I deny the Tribute it so well deserves. He that admires not antient Authors, betrays a secret he would conceal, and tells the world, that he does not understand them. Let us be as far from neglecting, as from copying, their admirable Compositions: Sacred be their Rights, and inviolable their Fame. . . . Let us build our Compositions with the Spirit, and in the Taste, of the Antients; not with their Materials: Thus will they resemble the structures of *Pericles* at *Athens*, which *Plutarch* commends for having had an air of Antiquity as soon as they were built."³² What, in fact, men like Young and

Sherburn of the University of Chicago, who is preparing a study of Pope's reputation before 1756.

³¹ The list which follows is designed not as a complete bibliography of the movement but merely as evidence of its strength and importance: Addison in *Spectator*, No. 160, Sept. 3, 1711; Joseph Trapp, *Praelectiones Poeticae* (1711-1715), third ed., 1736, II, 317-318; Leonard Welsted, *A Dissertation concerning the Perfection of the English Language, the State of Poetry, &c.* (1724), in Durham, *Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century*, New Haven, 1915, pp. 377-378; Edward Young, "On Lyrick Poetry," in *Ocean. An Ode . . . To which is prefix'd, An Ode to the King: And a Discourse on Ode* (1728); Thomas Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735), pp. 29-34; William Melmoth, *The Letters of Sir Thomas Fitzosborne on Several Subjects* (1742), Letters v, LVII; Johnson, in *Rambler*, No. 121, May 14, 1751; Lloyd, in *The Connoisseur*, No. 67, May 8, 1755; John Armstrong, *Sketches or Essays on Various Subjects, By Launcelot Temple* (1758), second edition, 1758, pp. 45-46; Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). A certain antipathy to imitation as such no doubt underlay some of the strictures on Pope's imitateness listed in note 30 above.

³² *Conjectures*, ed. Brandl, *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, XXXIX, 1903, p. 21. Cf. "On Lyrick Poetry" (1728): "Nor is what I say at all inconsistent with a due deference for the great Standards of Antiquity; nay, that very

Johnson sought to effect was not a supplanting in any degree of the established classical taste, but a revivification of that taste through the cultivation of a sane originality. In pursuance of this ideal they condemned imitation of models wherever they found it, no less emphatically when its object was Milton or Spenser than when it was Virgil or Pope.³³

Compared with these men, Felton clearly occupied a conservative position. His was the stricter creed of the seventeenth century.³⁴ It is, therefore, all the more noteworthy that among the writers whom he recommended to his pupil as worthy of imitation, not the least prominent place fell to Spenser and Milton.

Felton devoted the last sixty pages of his epistle to an appreciation of the great English writers of his own and the preceding century.³⁵ The relation which he conceived to exist between this survey and his program of imitation he set forth in a page of transition immediately following his remarks on style:

To treat of a true Taste in a formal Method, would be very insipid; it is best collected from the Beauties and Laws of Writing, and must rise from every Man's own Apprehensions and Notion of what he heareth and readeth.

It may be therefore of farther Use, and most Advantage to Your Lordship, as well as a Relief and Entertainment to refresh Your Spirits in the End of a tedious Discourse, if besides mentioning the Classic Authors as they fall in my Way, I lay before You some of the correctest Writers of

deference is an argument for it, for doubtless their *Example* is on my side in this matter. And we should rather imitate their example in the general motives, and fundamental methods of their working, than in their *works* themselves" (*Ocean. An Ode*, p. 27).

³³ Cf. Johnson's remarks in *The Rambler*, No. 121, and in *Lives of the Poets*, ed. Hill, 1905, III, pp. 332-333; and Lloyd's poem in *The Connoisseur*, No. 67.

³⁴ His conservatism appeared in other matters than his conception of imitation: in his remarks on education (pp. 7-10); in his preference of the Latin to the Greek classics (pp. 18 ff.); in his notion of taste as an essentially aristocratic growth (pp. 59-68); in his admiration for Cowley (pp. 31, 168-169) and for the poets of the school of Waller, Dryden, and Pope (pp. xi-xii, 154, 156-157, 254-255, 259-264); in his adherence to the party of Sir William Temple in the debate of the Ancients and Moderns (pp. 270-271).

³⁵ The list included Addison, Bacon, Chaucer, Clarendon, Congreve, Cowley, Daniel (as a historian), Denham, Dryden, Herbert of Cherbury, Hooker, Jonson, Milton, Otway, John Philips, Pope, Prior, Raleigh, Rowe, Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, Steele, Suckling, Tillotson, Waller.

this Age and the last, in several Faculties upon different Subjects: Not that Your Lordship should be drawn into a servile Imitation of any of them, but that You may see into the Spirit, Force, and Beauty of them all, and form Your Pen from those general Notions of Life and Delicacy, of Fine Thoughts and Happy Words, which rise to Your Mind upon reading the great Masters of Style in their several Ways, and Manner of Excelling.

I must beg leave, therefore, to deferr a little the Entertainment I promised, while I endeavour to lead Your Lordship into the true Way of *Imitation*, if ever You shall propose any Original for Your Copy; or, which is infinitely preferable, into a perfect Mastery of the Spirit and Perfections of every Celebrated Writer, whether Ancient or Modern.³⁶

Felton, in short, while cautioning his reader in the usual manner against imitating servilely and indiscriminately, plainly meant to couple the English writers with the Greek and Roman as proper models for the true imitation. Interpreted in this way, his comments on Spenser and Milton, unoriginal as they were in themselves, possess a greater significance than attaches to most similar passages of the same date.³⁷

The appreciation of Spenser was none the less hearty for being brief: "His antique Verse has Music in it to ravish any Ears, that can be sensible of the softest, sweetest Numbers, that ever flowed from a Poet's Pen."³⁸ As a pastoral poet he was the peer of Theocritus; and, Virgil-worshipper that Felton was, he preferred the *Shepherd's Calender* to the *Eclogues*.³⁹ It was perhaps from Spenser that he acquired a taste for the older English language that

³⁶ *Dissertation*, pp. 131-133.

³⁷ A great many such passages have recently been made accessible. See (for Spenser) H. E. Cory, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser*, Berkeley, 1911, chs. iv, v; and (for Milton) R. D. Havens, "Seventeenth-century notices of Milton" and "The early reputation of *Paradise Lost*," in *Englische Studien*, bd. 40, 1909, pp. 175-186, 187-199, and J. W. Good, *Studies in the Milton Tradition*, University of Illinois Studies, 1915. An interesting contemporary parallel to Felton's general position is Prior's simultaneous recommendation of Horace and Spenser "to the Consideration and Study of Those, who design to Excel in Poetry" (Preface to *An Ode, Humbly Inscrib'd to the Queen* . . . , 1706).

³⁸ *Dissertation*, 256. On the significance of this praise of Spenser's "Numbers" see Cory, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser*, pp. 115, 122, 144.

³⁹ *Dissertation*, 269. Comparisons of the pastorals of Spenser and Virgil were frequent in the criticism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (see Cory, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser*, pp. 120, 132, 135, 140); few of them were as favorable to Spenser as this of Felton's.

made him, in speaking of style, advise the poet rather to "revive *old Words*, than create *new ones*." ⁴⁰

Felton had rather more to say of Milton than he did of Spenser. His general estimate, based exclusively upon *Paradise Lost*, placed the English poet above both Homer and Virgil, the first of whom he excelled in "Force and Richness of Imagination"; the second, in "justness of Thought, and exactness of the Work." ⁴¹ The cause of this superiority lay partly, to be sure, in Milton's genius, but much more in his constant traffic with the Scriptures. They were "the Fountain from which he derived his Light; the Sacred Treasure that enriched his Fancy, and furnished him with all the Truth and Wonders of God and His Creation, of Angels and Men, which no mortal Brain was able either to discover or conceive." They brought it to pass that in him alone, "of all human Writers, You will meet all his Sentiments and Words raised and suited to the Greatness and Dignity of the Subject." ⁴² But it was not in substance alone that Milton outranked other poets. Felton had no doubts concerning the merits of Milton's style or of his blank verse, and it is to be noted that in the same connection he found something to commend in one of the first of the eighteenth-century imitators of the Miltonic manner, John Philips. "Milton," the passage ran, "is the Assertor of Poetic Liberty, and would have freed us from the Bondage of Rhime, but like Sinners, and like Lovers, we hug our Chain, and are pleased in being Slaves. Some indeed have made some faint Attempts to break it, but their Verse had all the Softness and Effeminacy of Rhime without the Music: ⁴³ And

⁴⁰ *Dissertation*, 90. An earlier passage is even more emphatic: "There is a vast Treasure, an inexhaustible Fund in the old *English*, from whence Authors may draw constant Supplies, as our Officers make their surest Recruits from the Coal-Works and the Mines. The Weight, the Strength, and Significance of many antiquated Words, should recommend them to Use again. 'Tis only wiping off the Rust they have contracted, and separating them from the Dross they lie mingled with, and both in Value and Beauty they will rise above the Standard, rather than fall below it" (*ibid.*, 88-89). Though contemporary opinion was divided on the question of antiquated diction, Felton's outspoken hospitality had few parallels. See for examples of a liberalism approaching his, Durham, *op. cit.*, pp. 81, 232, 344, and *Spectator*, No. 540, Nov. 19, 1712.

⁴¹ *Dissertation*, 269.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁴³ For a list of experiments in blank verse between 1685 and 1709, see Havens, *Englische Studien*, bd. 40, 195 n.

Dryden himself, who sometimes struggled to get loose, always relapsed, and was faster bound than ever; but Rhime was his Province, and he could make the Tinkling of his Chains harmonious. *Mr. Philips* hath trod the nearest in his great Master's Steps, and hath equalled him in his Verse more than he falleth below him in the Compass and Dignity of his Subject. *The Shilling* is truly *Splendid* in his Lines, and his Poems will live longer than the unfinished Castle, as long as *Blenheim* is remembered, or *Cyder* drunk in *England*.⁴⁴ But I have digressed from Milton, and that I may return, and say all in a Word: His Style, His Thoughts, his Verse are as superiour to the Generality of other Poets, as his Subject. His Disloyalty alone throws a Cloud upon his Glory, and we stand amazed to think that Man could ever be a Rebel, who had seen, as it were, and described, in all the Pomp of Terror, the Rebellion and Punishment of the Apostate Angels."⁴⁵

It remains to indicate briefly the bearing of Felton's general position upon the question raised at the beginning of this article. To assume that he expressed the point of view either of all conservative critics of his day with regard to the imitation of Spenser and Milton, or of all eighteenth-century imitators of these poets with regard to the theory underlying their practice, would of course

⁴⁴ The allusions are to *The Splendid Shilling* (1705), *Blenheim. A Poem* (1705), and *Cyder. A Poem* (1708).

⁴⁵ *Dissertation*, 257-259. The attitude toward blank verse expressed in this passage was fairly common at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Within the decade preceding the publication of Felton's book, essentially similar views found utterance in John Dennis's Preface to his *Britannia Triumphans* (1704), in Isaac Watts' *The Adventurous Muse* (1706) and the preface to the 1709 edition of his *Horae Lyricae*, in Edmund Smith's *A Poem to the Memory of Mr. John Philips* (c. 1709), and in Shaftesbury's *Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author* (1710), II, i, and *Miscellaneous Reflections* (1711), v, i. The existence of this current of opinion—to say nothing of the preference for blank verse shown during the same years by poets like Watts, Philips, and Dennis—is clear evidence that later rejection of the couplet constituted by no means such a heresy as has been supposed (e. g., by Phelps, *op. cit.*, 37). A careful study of the whole question would show, I think, that the eighteenth-century movement in favor of blank verse, far from being a new development, was in the main an outgrowth of the agitation of the preceding half-century, the chief stimuli of which were Milton's prefatory note to *Paradise Lost* (1667) and the Earl of Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse* (1684, 1685).

be altogether unwarranted. Doubtless many of the former hesitated to admit imitation of the moderns to the same place of privilege as imitation of the ancients,⁴⁶ just as many of the latter undoubtedly had less reverence than Felton for the Romans, or for those poets of his own time who wrote in the spirit of the Romans. The day has passed for all such wholesale generalizing about the eighteenth century. On the other hand, it is perfectly reasonable to infer that Felton did not stand entirely alone in his views, and that the essentially neo-classical background of his admiration for the two great English poets of the past age characterized also the attitude of others.⁴⁷ At any rate, without denying that much eighteenth-century imitation of Spenser and Milton proceeded from other motives than those comprised in the Renaissance dogma of imitation, we may well hesitate before we read a reactionary meaning into the "revivals" as a whole.

* "Critics seem agreed," wrote Joseph Warton (*The Adventurer*, No. 63, June 12, 1753), "in giving greater latitude to the imitation of the ancients than of later writers."

"It certainly characterized that of Joseph Warton, whose *Enthusiast* (1744) and *Ode to Fancy* (1746) are usually regarded as important events in the development of eighteenth-century Miltonic imitation (Phelps calls the former "one of the most important poems in the Romantic movement" —*op. cit.*, 90). Warton's views on imitation may be gathered from a paper in *The Adventurer* (No. 89, Sept. 11, 1753), from a short passage in the *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1756), fifth edition, 1806, I, 94-96, and from a note on Pope's Preface of 1717 in his edition of Pope (1797). The last text is particularly interesting, as it reveals him in the rôle of critic of Young. After citing Young's arraignment of imitation from the *Conjectures*, he commented as follows: "It might, perhaps, have been replied to Young; you indeed, have given us a considerable number of original thoughts in your works, but they would have been more chaste and correct if you had imitated the ancients more" (quoted in *The Works of Pope*, ed. Bowles, I, 1806, 8 n.). In short, as between the points of view represented by Young and by Felton respectively, Warton clearly leaned to the latter. Whatever may be said of his poetry in other regards, the æsthetic principles upon which it was based were unmistakably neo-classical.

Northwestern University.
